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SUBVERSIVE LAUGHTER: THE SAYINGS OF COURTESANS IN BOOK 13 OF ATHENAEUS' *DEIPNOSOPHISTAE*

LAURA MCCLURE

Abstract. Although the witticisms of courtesans recorded by Athenaeus in Book 13 of the *Deipnosophistae* (577d–85f) comprise an important source, if not of the actual words of hetaeras, at least of the genres and verbal conventions identified with them, they have received scant attention from classical scholars. The content and context of these remarks reveal a complex verbal dynamic in which obscene punning challenges normative class and gender categories and represents the hetaera as in discursive control. By ventriloquizing these witticisms, Athenaeus' interlocutors appropriate yet another aspect of Athenian literary heritage to articulate their own self-presentation as they vie for discursive status.

ALTHOUGH THE NUMEROUS WITTICISMS of courtesans recorded by Athenaeus in Book 13 of the *Deipnosophistae* (577d–85f) comprise an important source, if not of the actual words of hetaeras, at least of the genres and verbal conventions identified with them, they have received scant attention from classical scholars. Previous assessments have emphasized the role played by these witticisms in the hetaera's subordination and objectification, but they have failed to account for their discursive function within the context of Athenaeus. This essay will argue that the content and context of these remarks reveal a complex verbal dynamic in which obscene punning challenges normative class and gender categories and actually depicts the hetaera in discursive control.[1] Whether in the symposium and its public correlative, the comic theater, or in

[1] As Henry 1992, 262, argues, "Besides their eloquence and bravado, the courtesans Myrtilus praises speak only as the self-defined objects of men's sexual pleasure"; cf. also Henry 2000, 504. Keuls 1985, 199, similarly describes the cultivated hetaera as "a fabrication of the male mind," whose witticisms consist of "male-generated jokes, hinging on puns and sexual innuendo." Faraone 1999, 156 and n. 90, views the hetaera's repartee as part of a generalized preference for male speech modes, exemplified in magical practice by their use of *agōgē* spells normally deployed by men; cf. Luc. *DMeretr.* 4.1; *AP*5.205; Theoc. *Id.* 2.23–32.

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Athenaeus' literary banquet, the hetaera's speech provokes the laughter that both seduces and ridicules.[2] This parodic, carnivalesque discourse inserts into the conversation of respectable men a risqué jesting that comically exposes and denounces the pretensions of philosophers.[3] By ventriloquizing these witticisms, Athenaeus' interlocutors appropriate yet another aspect of Athenian literary heritage to articulate their own ethical self-presentation in their quest for discursive status.[4]

Composed in the late second to early third century C.E. by Athenaeus of Naucratis, the *Deipnosophistae* portrays a fictional banquet modeled after Plato's *Symposium* that occurs over a two-day period at Rome. Until recently, classical scholars have largely viewed this encyclopedic compilation as a work of little literary merit although an important source of literary quotations and social customs; indeed, it provides a staggering amount of both: the author quotes directly from Attic tragedy more than 250 times and makes reference to approximately 260 Athenian comic poets.[5] The work falls squarely within the genre of sympotic literature initiated by Plato and Xenophon, one that perhaps originates in the salacious after-dinner story of the adulterous Aphrodite Odysseus tells to the Phaeacians in the *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* 8.266–369). As a literary genre, the symposium encourages joke telling, witty anecdotes, and comic action "because such a wide variety of incidents and situations can be allowed to take place naturally and spontaneously" (Anderson 2000, 318). Thus even in Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes' jester-like hiccup (Pl. *Smp.* 185c–e; γελωτοποιεῖς, cf. 189a–b) and Alcibiades' drunken appearance with an *aulētris* (Pl. *Smp.* 212d) interrupt an otherwise serious (and sober) round of speechifying. These discourses of pleasure have a subversive aspect because they interrupt the otherwise orderly progression of speeches.

[2] Davidson 1997, 135, argues that the hetaera's literary allusions frequently disguise obscene propositions in a sort of verbal striptease that shows a "resistance to closed meaning, to definition."

[3] A recent strand of criticism views these witticisms as a parodic lampooning of the philosophical tradition; see Hawley 1993, 87, and Davidson 1997, 93. For Hawley, courtesans' jokes undercut or parody the catalogues of maxims uttered by women in Plutarch, e.g., *Apophthegmata Lakonika*, and other such sources. Similarly, Kurke 2002 argues that courtesans' jokes in Machon's *Chreiae* provide a subversive and democratic discourse in an era of Macedonian political rule. I am grateful to Leslie for letting me read a version of the essay before its publication.

[4] On the notion of performing the self as a means of articulating status in the Second Sophistic period, see Gleason 1991, and most recently, Whitmarsh 2001.

[5] On the number of quotations from tragedy, see Collard 1969, 168; on allusions to fifth-century comedy, see Sidwell 2000, 137.

In his introduction, Athenaeus states that he has recounted the fine sayings of educated men, those well versed in *paideia* (τοὺς κατὰ πᾶσαν παιδείαν ἐμπειροτάτους . . . τῶν καλλίστων, 1.1a). The conversation will include innumerable kinds of jokes (σκωμμάτων εἴδη μυρία, 1.1b) as well as educated table banter (παίζοντος, 3.108f). The plan of the discourse will reflect the banquet's menu, and the arrangement of the books will coincide with the courses of the dinner (1.1b). The narrator then sets forth a catalogue of the party's primary speakers: historical personages such as Athenaeus himself; Larensis, the Roman host; Galen, the doctor; Ulpian, resident Atticist and chief speaker; the philosopher Cynulcus, the stereotypically impoverished philosopher who despises the encyclopedic learning of his tablemates; and Myrtilus of Thessaly, a *grammatikos* who is given to frequent attacks against philosophers. The cast also features numerous other named guests as well as "a host of anonymous and briefly intrusive extras" (Baldwin 1976, 24). All are "sophists" in the sense that they represent the learned professions (Baldwin 1977, 38).

Like its Platonic prototype, a proper banquet consists of καλοὶ καὶ ἀγαθοὶ ξυμπόται καὶ πεπαιδευμένοι, refined gentlemen who speak in an orderly fashion even when drunk (κοσμίως, 3.97b); they also significantly do not include prostitutes at their table. Athenaeus has followed this prescription since women do not appear as interlocutors in his book, although in actual practice, hetaeras and female entertainers, such as flute girls, mimes, and dancers, participated in the performance culture of the symposium (X. *Smp.* 3.2; Pl. *Smp.* 176e). In addition to providing theatrical entertainment, hetaeras probably engaged in verbal exchanges with their male clientele, which may have taken the form of poetic and rhetorical improvisation, riddle-telling, philosophical discussion, *chreiae*, and verbal games.[6] Hetaeras enter Athenaeus' discourse principally in Book 13. Introduced through quoted snippets of Middle and New Comedy, Attic oratory, and historians such as Phylarchus and Theopompus, their presence signals a transition to the erotic discourse of the philosophical banquet, thereby reinforcing the notion of a metasymposium.[7] Book 13 is also the only section of the *Deipnosophistae* designated by a special title, *Peri Gunaikōn*, and it uncharacteristically begins with an invocation to a Muse, Erato, patron of love poetry, in which the narrator

[6] Lukinovich 1990, 264, discusses the verbal features of sympotic entertainment, including riddles. See also 162b–e; Anderson 2000, 318–19.

[7] Pellizer 1990, 181; on Athenaeus' metasymposium, see Milanezi 2000, 401. In art, the appearance of hetaeras in sympotic scenes on vases used by symposiasts serves a similar function, for which see Neils 2000, 208.

asks for help in recounting his "erotic catalogue" (τὸν ἐρωτικὸν . . . κατάλογον, 555b; Henry 1992, 261). This poetic invocation suggests an epic endeavor while at the same time emphasizing the itemizing aspect of Book 13, much of which concerns itself with lists of hetaeras' names and other elements borrowed from Hellenistic prosopographies of courtesans.

An opening anecdote about the comic poet Antiphanes and Alexander the Great, recorded by Lycophron in his *Peri Kōmōidia*, informs the reader that Book 13 will focus on low genres and their characters. When the king voices his displeasure at the play Antiphanes recites for him, the comic poet responds that only a man who participates in contribution dinners (ἀπὸ συμβολῶν) or gives and receives blows over a hetaera (555a) could fully appreciate his subject. As Myrtilus later points out, the symposium is the appropriate context for this comic and erotic discourse while syllogisms and philosophical discussion are to be avoided (περὶ ἀφροδισίων ἁρμοστὸν εἶναι ἐν τῷ οἴνῳ μνείαν ποιεῖσθαι, 607b). The symposium, like the comic theater—two performance venues elsewhere equated by Socrates (ὡς γὰρ ἐν συμποσίῳ μεγάλῳ τῷ θεάτρῳ, Plut. *Mor.* 10c–d)—may be viewed as sites of "actual and symbolic struggle," a kind of carnival setting where hierarchical rank is temporarily suspended and the drinking facilitates a kind of licensed release (Stallybrass and White 1986, 13). In one account, the symposium's temporary relaxation of norms actually enabled the Thebans, with the help of a few men disguised as hetaeras, to regain political control of their city after a period of Spartan domination (X. *HG.* 5.4.4). The special context of the symposium or its public counterpart, the comic stage, also allowed for verbal license that both mocked and derided its participants. Its discourse produced, in the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, festive laughter, "the laughter of all the people. . . . directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants" (Bakhtin 1984, 11–12). Viewed from this perspective, the courtesan's crude jokes and their obscene counter meanings temporarily disrupt social hierarchies, diminishing persons and discourses of high status (Bakhtin 1984, 10; Stallybrass and White 1986, 10–11). In Book 13, Myrtilus marshals this low discourse to ridicule or parody the philosophical tradition of the Cynics; in fact, he uses their own genre of the *chreia*, the witty remark, against them by placing it in the mouths of courtesans.

The author embeds the jokes of hetaeras in the lengthy speech of the buffoonish *grammatikos*, Myrtilus, who is suitably named after a poet of Attic Old Comedy (566e). His speech forms part of a standard rhetorical debate over the virtues of loving women versus boys staged between himself and his rival, Cynulcus. Myrtilus repeatedly characterizes his own

discourse as a catalogue (590a–c; 555b; 599e), and his continual preoccupation with the names and nicknames of hetaeras (he mentions over 150) amply demonstrates his form of knowledge. Indeed, his strained discussion of the change in the length of the vowel "a" in the name of one courtesan, Mānia, from μᾰνία (madness, 578b–c), shows his pedantic, and erotic, proclivities.[8] Such empty academic exercises, however, invite the moral censure of Cynulcus, who derides Myrtilus for neglecting the Homeric tradition in favor of lowbrow genres like comedy and erotic treatises.

Myrtilus, in his opening parry, a quotation of Hermeias' *Iambics* similar to the invective choliambics of Hipponax, delivers a scathing denunciation of the Stoics and their love of boys: "Listen, you Styacs, merchants of chatter (ἀκούσατ', ὦ Στύακες, ἔμποροι λήρου, 563e)." The phrase contains an obscene pun on the word Στύακες, the reading of manuscripts CE. The word may refer to the epithet σκύλακες (pups) bestowed upon the Cynics as well as to the verb στύω (swell), a state brought about in these philosopher "boy watchers" (παιδοπῖπαι). This attack on the hypocritical lifestyle and precepts of philosophers, especially their love of boys (563e–66d), assimilates their sexuality, in the manner of Attic Old Comedy, to their profession, a strategy also adopted by Cynulcus.

The philosopher, in turn, denigrates Myrtilus as a γραμματικώτατος (570b), viewing his knowledge as the vacuous product of patronizing taverns and public houses, venues associated only with the lowest social class since, in the words of Isocrates, "not even a slave would dare to eat or drink in a tavern":

> σὺ δέ, ὦ σοφιστά, ἐν τοῖς καπηλείοις συναναφύρῃ οὐ μετὰ ἑταίρων ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἑταιρῶν, μαστροπευούσας περὶ σαυτὸν οὐκ ὀλίγας ἔχων καὶ περιφέρων αἰεὶ τοιαυτὶ βιβλία Ἀριστοφάνους καὶ Ἀπολλοδώρου καὶ Ἀμμωνίου καὶ Ἀντιφάνους, ἔτι δὲ Γοργίου τοῦ Ἀθηναίου, πάντων τούτων συγγεγραφότων περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι Ἑταιρίδων. ὦ τῆς καλῆς σου πολυμαθίας, ὡς κατ' οὐδὲν ἐμιμήσω Θεόμανδρον τὸν Κυρηναῖον, ὅν φησι Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ περὶ Εὐδαιμονίας περιιόντα ἐπαγγέλλεσθαι διδάσκειν εὐτυχίαν, ἐρωτοδιδάσκαλε. (567a–b)[9]
>
> But you, O Sophist, you associate constantly not with male friends but with courtesans, having around yourself not just a few procuresses, and always

[8] Hawley 1993, 86. On the character of Myrtilus in the dialogue, see Baldwin 1977, 45–46.

[9] This is the first use of the word πορνογράφος; for a discussion of the term, see Henry 2000, 508.

> carrying around the sorts of books written by Aristophanes, Apollodorus, Ammonius, Antiphanes, even Gorgias of Athens, all of whom have written treatises entitled *On Athenian Courtesans*. O what lovely learning you have! You do not at all resemble Theomander of Cyrene, of whom Theophrastus says in his book *On Happiness* that he went about professing to teach about good fortune, whereas you only teach about lust!

Cynulcus here alludes to the lists of hetaeras and the anecdotal accounts of their lives and sayings that originated in the Hellenistic period.[10] Indeed, the literary tradition even attributes authorship of a related type of treatise to historical hetaeras such as Elephantis, a courtesan of Alexandria, copies of whose sex manual the emperor Tiberius allegedly supplied at his country estate for ready reference during orgies (Suet. *Tib.* 43), and Philaenis, author of a licentious volume on *aphrodisia* mentioned by Athenaeus in connection with the cookbook of Archestratus (335c–e; 457e).[11]

With the hapax ἐρωτοδιδάσκαλος, Cynulcus equates Myrtilus' status as a sophist and grammarian with his depraved lifestyle; and, while the latter emphatically denies that he is an *erōtomanēs*, he nonetheless admits his erotic sensibilities (ἐρωτικός, 599e). By such methods, Cynulcus introduces the subject of prostitution that will dominate the table talk throughout the remainder of Book 13. To the invective against married women earlier voiced by the symposiasts with ψέγειν at 559e, the philosopher now adds a vilification of high-priced courtesans, the *megalomisthoi* familiar from the pages of oratory and the comic stage and from whom many comic plays borrowed their titles (567c–d).[12] In so doing, he imitates his Cynic forebear, Diogenes, who once compared attractive hetaeras to "death mixed with honey" (θανασίμῳ μελικράτῳ, D. L. 6.61). Nor is it a coincidence that the philosopher provides the first

[10] Athenaeus alludes to several such authors in this passage and elsewhere who wrote treatises on Athenian hetaeras: Antiphanes, a poet of Middle Comedy (first play c. 358 B.C.E.; 587b), Aristophanes of Byzantium (257–180 B.C.E., 586b and 591d) who listed the names of 135 Athenian hetaeras, Apollodorus of Athens (180–120 B.C.E., 586a, 591c), Ammonius (second century B.C.E., 587b), Lynceus of Samos (583e), Gorgias of Athens (c. 44 B.C.E., 583d), and Callistratus (591f). For a list of Middle and New comedies that took their titles from the names of hetaeras, cf. 567c and Hawley 1993, 88 n. 4.

[11] Brendel 1970, 67 n. 70, discusses the scant evidence for Hellenistic erotic treatises and art catalogues.

[12] Davidson 1997, 106, borrows this term from Athenaeus to refer to "the rich and famous ones, the ones catalogued in scholarly treatises, had plays written about them and speeches composed on their behalf, the ones whose *bon mots* were recorded in anecdotal collections."

references to oratory in Book 13, a genre from which he borrows the strategy of using hetaeras as a vehicle of invective against his rhetorical opponent. Myrtilus, however, puts a twist on this time-tested technique by delivering what amounts to an encomium of hetaeras, the central portion of which includes their witticisms at table. This praise speech actually serves another purpose, however: by exposing the hypocrisy of Cynulcus and his kind, it turns them into objects of sympotic and comic ridicule.

THE SPEECH OF HETAERAS

In his opening defense of "real" hetaeras (τῶν ὄντως ἑταιρῶν), those capable of an "honest love" (φιλίαν ἄδολον, 571b), Myrtilus draws on a fragment of Ephippus to emphasize their value as genteel entertainers who brighten the spirits of their clientele by means of their flattering and agreeable conversation:

> ἔπειτά γ' εἰσιόντ', ἐὰν λυπούμενος
> τύχῃ τις ἡμῶν, ἐκολάκευσεν ἡδέως·
> ἐφίλησεν οὐχὶ συμπιέσασα τὸ στόμα
> ὥσπερ πολέμιον, ἀλλὰ τοῖσι στρουθίοις
> χανοῦσ' ὁμοίως, ἧσε, παρεμυθήσατο
> ἐποίησέ θ' ἱλαρὸν εὐθέως τ' ἀφεῖλε πᾶν
> αὐτοῦ τὸ λυποῦν κἀπέδειξεν ἵλεων. (Ephippus, *Empolē* fr. 6 K.–A. = 571f)
>
> And then if one of us happens to come in feeling troubled,
> she greets him with pleasant flattery;
> she kisses him, not squeezing her lips close together,
> as if he were hateful to her, but opening her mouth as
> sparrows do; she sits him down, she soothes and cheers him,
> and soon takes away all his trouble and makes him happy again.

Making pleasant conversation appears to have comprised a major portion of the hetaera's art: Socrates also mentions cheering words (ὅ τι ἂν λέγουσα εὐφραίνοις, X. *Mem.* 3.11.10) as one of the hetaera's many seductions. The Hellenistic poet Machon similarly describes the courtesan Mania as "being well equipped in speech and conversation" (φωνῇ δ' ὁμιλίᾳ τε κεχορηγημένη, Machon 198 = 578c). In one of Lucian's dialogues, the successful hetaera not only keeps a smile on her face but also provides her clients with clever companionship (and of course, there is a sexual connotation here: προσομιλοῦσα δεξιῶς, *DMeretr.* 6. 3). A lover in one of Alciphron's letters praises the flattering blandishments and the

Siren-like conversation of his hetaera (ὁμιλίαις, Alciphr. 4.11.7). In fact, the talk of hetaeras on the Greek comic stage is typically filled with endearments: in one fragment quoted by Athenaeus, brothel workers attract customers through their use of flattering diminutives, calling old men πατρίδια and young men ἀπφάρια (569c).[13] So also the Athenian courtesan Philaenium in Plautus' *Asinaria* is described as deploying *verba blanda* (525).

The hetaera's speech both contains multiple levels of signification while at the same time figuring her as masculine: in a fragment of Anaxilas quoted by Larensis at the beginning of Book 13, the prostitute's brazen self-advertisement is simultaneously riddling, flattering, and obscene:

> Σφίγγα Θηβαίαν δὲ πάσας ἔστι τὰς πόρνας καλεῖν,
> αἳ λαλοῦσ'[14] ἁπλῶς μὲν οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ἐν αἰνιγμοῖς τισιν,
> ὡς ἐρῶσι καὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ σύνεισιν ἡδέως.
> εἶτα "τετράπους μοι γένοιτο, φησί, σκίμπους ἢ θρόνος,"
> εἶτα δὴ "τρίπους τις," εἶτα, φησί, "παιδίσκη δίπους."
>
> (Anaxil. fr. 22.22–26 K.–A. = 558d)

> It is possible to call every *pornē* a Theban Sphinx;
> they chatter not in simple language, but in riddles,
> about how sweetly they like to love and kiss and come together.
> And one says, "Let me have a four-footed bed or chair";
> another, "Make it a tripod"; still another, "A two-footed gal."
>
> (Trans. adapted from Gulick)

Here the hetaera (the word is used later, and interchangeably, with *pornē*) recasts the riddle posed by the Sphinx and solved by Oedipus. ("What walks on four feet in the morning, two feet in the afternoon and three feet in the evening?") into an obscene advertisement of her sexual expertise. Riddles, defined by Athenaeus as "a problem put in jest" (γρῖφος πρόβλημά ἐστι παιστικόν, 448c), regularly accompanied drinking at the symposium and often alluded to the accoutrements or conditions of the drinking party.[15] At the same time, the hetaera parodies the liter-

[13] According to Webster 1974, 102, hetaeras in Menander are given to using "nursery endearments" and to swearing oaths; see also Henry 1985, 57–60; Gomme and Sandbach 1973, 131.

[14] I follow Causabon's emendation here, in the place of λαβοῦσ' of ms. A, and λαβοῦσαι of mss. CE.

[15] Martin 2001, 63; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 150e–f and *AP* 14.14 (*aulos*); 14.23, 36 (pickled fish); 14.26 (a linen hand-towel); and 14.52 (wine). Note that the hetaera Thais at Alciphr. 4.7.8 attributes riddle telling to the philosopher-sophist Euthydemus.

ary tradition, reducing the tragic predicament of Oedipus to a vulgar joke.

There is also a tradition of females propounding riddles: New Comedy features a mother-daughter pair riddling about sleep in a fragment of Alexis' *Hypnos* (449d–e) and Sappho's famous riddle about a letter (450e–51b). Likewise, Cleobolina, the daughter of one of the seven sages, tells a riddle about an *aulos* (Plut. *Mor.* 150e–f). In contrast, prostitutes frequently pose obscene riddles, such as the one about phallus told by three Samian girls while drinking at the Adonia (Diphilus fr. 49 K.–A. = 451b).[16] Anaxilas represents courtesans as riddle tellers, who use their fawning speech—double in meaning and potentially obscene—to entice clients. Because the riddle teller manipulates "the normal borders of referential speech" and thus controls access to meaning, the hetaera through her conversation temporarily wins discursive mastery over her interlocutors.[17] For this reason, one supposes, the mock legal contract portrayed in Plautus' *Asinaria* prohibits the Greek courtesan Philaenium from speaking in double meanings (*verbum . . . perplexabile*, 792).

According to Myrtilus, the hetaera's ability to manipulate meanings and deliver witty double entendres results from *paideia*, a masculine familiarity with rhetoric and the literary tradition:

> καὶ ἄλλαι δὲ ἑταῖραι μέγα ἐφρόνουν ἐφ' αὑταῖς, παιδείας ἀντεχόμεναι καὶ τοῖς μαθήμασι χρόνον ἀπομερίζουσαι· διόπερ καὶ εὔθικτοι πρὸς τὰς ἀπαντήσεις ἦσαν. (583f)
>
> Other hetaeras also thought very highly of themselves, getting an education and devoting their time to learning. For this reason they were quick at rejoinders.

Myrtilus later identifies *paideia* with the tradition of erotic verse initiated by the lyric poets (601a). These educated hetaeras are represented as engaging on equal discursive footing with their male interlocutors and

[16] Since many riddles revolved around aspects of the symposium, the hetaera might have served as a common subject; indeed, one solution to the riddle posed at Thgn. 861–64 is the hetaera whose feminine identity is highlighted by adjectives, αὐτομάτη, ἑσπερίη, ὀρθρίη; see Martin 2001, 60.

[17] Hasan-Rokem and Shulman 1996, 5. Although he does not specifically mention riddles, Davidson 1997, 135, discusses the ambiguity of the hetaera's speech, which he characterizes as "notoriously enigmatic, parodic and punning." I am indebted to Angela Pitts for her sharing with me her wonderful discussion of riddles in her unpublished dissertation on Sappho's literary afterlife.

even, at times, turning the tables on them through their witty repartee.[18] Thus Athenaeus describes the courtesan Gnathaena as "exceedingly quick in her answers" (σφόδρα δ' ἦν εὔθικτος πρὸς τὰς ἀποκρίσεις, 583f) and "very adept and not unsophisticated in her replies" (ἐμμελὴς δ' ἦν πάνυ ἡ Γνάθαινα καὶ οὐκ ἀνάστειος ἀποφθέγξασθαι, 585b). Mania is similarly termed ἀστεῖα in her responses (ἀστεία τις ἀποκρίνασθαι, 578e), while the *aulētris* Lamia is said to be "quick and sophisticated" in her rejoinders (εὔθικτος καὶ ἀστικὴ πρὸς τὰς ἀποκρίσεις, 577d). The latter example is of special interest: the word ἀστική is actually Schweighäuser's emendation for ἀττική, the reading of all three manuscripts, suggesting perhaps an affinity between this type of verbal sophistication and classical Athens. Indeed, in a fragment of Anaxilas, the designation ἀστεία distinguishes the hetaera from her brothel counterpart, the *pornē* (Anaxilas fr. 21 K.–A. = 572b), while in Theocritus' *Idyll* 20, a hetaera describes her kisses as ἀστικά (Theoc. *Id.* 20.4) as she mocks the rude manners of a country bumpkin (ἀγροίκως, 20.3). For Aristotle, the category of τὰ ἀστεῖα—apophthegms, puns, and double-entendres—comprise an important aspect of male rhetorical training (Arist. *Rh.* 1411b–13b), and, in fact, such clever remarks could earn a defendant acquittal in the Athenian law courts.[19]

On the Roman side, Philaenium in Plautus' *Asinaria* utters *dicta docta* (525) in addition to her blandishments, while the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius inserts the witticisms of Augustus' daughter Julia into a fictional Roman dinner party mostly concerned with a discussion of Vergil. A couple of Julia's jokes turn the table on her male interlocutors, perhaps subverting, as Richlin has argued, Augustan moral discourse.[20] Her obscene double entendre, "I never take on a passenger unless the ship is full" (Macrob. *Sat.* 2.5.9), resembles in some respects the obscene jokes of Athenaeus' courtesans. Nonetheless, her table talk is termed *eleganter*

[18] Hawley 1993, 77, inexplicably insists that "the evidence . . . for [hetaeras'] alleged 'culture' is in fact scarce (77)," a view that is directly contradicted by 584a, 588b, and passim. Although not often described as σοφή by Athenaeus as in other texts, the adjectives εὔθικτος and ἀστεῖα suggest a degree of verbal sophistication. For the adjective σοφή and cognates as applied to prostitutes, cf. Axionicus fr. 1 K.–A. (a tambourinist described as σοφώτατε); Theophilus fr. 12.7 K.–A. (a harpist is σοφή); and Alciphr. 4.7.8, σοὶ νῦν μάλιστα φανοῦμαι σοφή). Hawley further notes that *sophisma* may refer to fellatio in Theopompus fr. 36.3 K.–A.; see also Henderson 1991, 183; cf. Ar. *Lys.* 546 and *Ec.* 895–96.

[19] Halliwell 1991, 293, and n. 55 points out that defendants in Attic oratory received acquittals through their use of τὰ ἀστεῖα; cf. Dem. 23.206; Lys. 24.18; Ar. *V.* 567.

[20] Richlin 1992, 73. It is possible that in attributing such joking to Julia, the tradition attempts to assimilate her to a prostitute, especially given her legendary sexual misconduct; for further discussion, see McGinn 1998, 170.

(2.5.6) and thus wins the admiration of her male audience (*mirantibus*, 2.5.2; *mirarentur*, 2.5.9). Although these witticisms may support the notion of educated hetaeras, the fact that many revolve around obscene meanings and temporary inversions of status affiliates them more fully with the subversive discourse of comedy and its function as social and literary parody.

FIGURES OF SYMPOTIC RAILLERY

Athenaeus and his contemporaries draw upon comic conventions that associate raillery or *skōmmata* with lower class characters such fishwives, innkeepers, prostitutes, and parasites.[21] The literary tradition frequently represents courtesans and parasites as subversive members of court and table; such figures direct their derisive humor toward their patrons, their paramours, and even each other. According to Alciphron, this type of raillery comprises one of the key components of the drinking party, together with songs, drinks, garlands, perfume, and sweetmeats (Alciphr. 4.14.3). Thus two hetaeras in another of his letters tease their lovers as they process to a pastoral symposium (τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀλλήλας ἐσκώπτομεν ἢ τοὺς ἐραστάς, Alciphr. 4.13.2). Their activity is referred to as παιδία (4.13.3), a type of verbal play also associated with the sophists at Athenaeus' table and with parasites (below). A hetaera in another letter mocks (κωμῳδήσασα ἀκολάστως, 4.13) a jeering bystander in response to his obscene pun on συκᾶς, a metaphor for the genitals in Middle Comedy and later literature: "Lucky is that place where you are going, since it will have lots of figs!" (μακάριον ἐκεῖνο τὸ χωρίον ὅποι βαδίζετε, ὅσας ἕξει συκᾶς, Alciphr. 4.13.2).[22] The hetaera's mockery, represented by the participle κωμῳδήσασα, temporarily figures the hetaera as in discursive control: instead of serving as the typical object of comic abuse, the hetaera ridicules her interlocutor. And, in fact, the structure of this exchange typifies those found between the hetaera and her clientele in Athenaeus, especially the aggressive ridicule directed toward specific individuals (ἔσκωπτε: Mania, Machon 245 = 579c; Gnathaena, Machon 322 = 580f).[23]

[21] Halliwell 1991, 289 and n. 40; cf. also Hom. *Il.* 20. 251–52; Ar. *Eq.* 1400, 1403; *V.* 496–469, 1388; *Ra.* 549, 857–58; *Pl.* 426–28, 435–36; Pl. *R.* 395d 6–7; *Lg.* 935a1.

[22] A prostitute in Axionicus fr. 1.4 K.–A. bears the name Ischas (dried fig); see Henderson 1991, 134 and n. 137.

[23] On the aggressive function of laughter in ancient Greek culture, see Henderson 1991, 42–43; and Halliwell 1991, 287.

The hetaera's male sympotic counterparts include parasites, flatterers, and the *gelōtopoios* or clown who paid for their dinners with jokes (614c; Xen. *Sym.* 1.14–15).[24] In Book 14, Ulpian informs us, quoting a line of Anaxandrides, that the mythical Rhadamanthys and Palamedes "invented the practice of the freeloader telling jokes" (τὸ δ' ἀσύμβολον εὗρε γελοῖα λέγειν Ῥαδάμανθυς/ καὶ Παλαμήδης, Anaxandr. 10 K.–A. = 614c). Like the hetaera, the jester delivered mocking jests or insults, *loidoria* and *skōmma* in classical prose, to produce laughter and also parodied tragic and comic scenes that included the imitation of various types of characters.[25] In Book 8 of the *Deipnosophistae*, the musician Stratonicus plays a similar role, and not insignificantly he also figures as the subject of nine anecdotes from Machon's *Chreiae* (Machon 91–167 = 348e–49f). His witticisms are embedded in Cynulcus' lengthy speech about fish (347d–52d) that begins with a well-known riddle about a fish recast as an insulting joke directed at a rival musician (347f); both of these speech genres were associated with hetaeras, as we saw above. His humor also involves puns, double meanings, sexual innuendo, and the unconventional use of proverbs, idioms, or quotations (351a–b; Gilula 2000, 426–27). The musician's verbal facility resembles that of the hetaera; he too always has a ready quip (περὶ τῆς εὐστοχίας αὐτοῦ τῶν ἀποκρίσεων, 348d). At the same time, Stratonicus, with his sharp tongue and clever rejoinders, shares a vision similar to that of Athenaeus' fellow diners, a penchant for humorous word play, literary quotation, and verbal competition, all reflecting a cosmopolitan perspective.

The masculine character of the hetaera's jesting is further seen in her similarity to these male figures at table, particularly the *kolax*, the flatterer or parasite, who makes a lengthy appearance at Athenaeus' table in Book 6 (234d–62b). At the banquet and on the comic stage, such figures ridicule their superiors while also serving as the targets of their jokes, as a parasite in a play of Epicharmus states, "There I am elegantly witty, and I cause much laughter and I praise my host" (τηνεὶ δὲ χαρίης τ' εἰμὶ καὶ ποιέω πολύν / γέλωτα καὶ τὸν ἰστιῶντ' ἐπαινέω, 235f–36a). In Menander's *Kolax*, the function of the parasite at the symposium is to produce *paidia*, that is, to laugh loudly, to mock others, and to drink a lot (ἀδρὸν γελάσαι, σκῶψαί τιν', ἐμπιεῖν πολύν, 258d). Alexis in his *Poiētae* describes one famous Athenian parasite, a certain Eucrates nicknamed

[24] Milanezi 2000, 403, notes that the word *gelōtopoios* does not appear until Xenophon; cf. X. *Smp.* 1.11, *An.* 7.3.33; Pl. *R.* 620c; and 613–16.

[25] Milanezi 2000, 405–6. The *gelōtopoios* Philip in Xenophon's *Symposium* thus plays at likenesses (6.8–7.1).

the Lark (ὁ Κόρυδος), as both the joke teller and the butt of humor, "Yes indeed, I want to be laughed at and always to say funny things" (πάνυ τοι βούλομαι / οὗτος γελᾶσθαι καὶ γέλοι' ἀεὶ λέγειν, 241d). The fact that the Lark had a reputation for prostituting himself (ὃς ἐδόκει πεπορνεῦσθαι, 241e) further underscores his similarity to the courtesan; even his derisive nickname contributes to his objectification, as do those of the famous courtesans such as *Phtheiropyle* (Louse-gate, 586a), *Lēmē* (Conjunctivitis, 569f), and *Hys* (Sow, 583a). Indeed, a joke that conflates the high cost of the Lark's sexual services with the price of a thrush (241e) plays on the parasite's sexual availability and commodity status in much the same way as jokes made about and by hetaeras.

The verbal license afforded by the context of the symposium and the temporary inversions it effects are seen in an anecdote about Philip of Macedon and his parasite: when the king made a joke at his parasite's expense, the latter responded with a role-inverting quip, "Then shall I not maintain you (instead of the other way around)?" (εἶτ' οὐκ ἐγὼ σέ, ἔφη, θρέψω, 248e). The subversive aspects of this humor did not always sit well with its patrons: a miscalculated joke that playfully poked fun at Arsinoë, the wife of Lysimachus, had a disastrous result. Telesphorus, a member at court, embedded a derisive jab against the queen, who was prone to vomiting, in a tragic reference to Euripides' *Antiopē*:

> κακῶν κατάρχεις τήνδ' ἐμοῦσαν εἰσάγων.
>
> (fr. adesp. 395 + 184 TGF² = 616c).

> You are starting trouble by bringing in this vomiting woman.

Altering τήνδε Μοῦσαν (this Muse) to sound like τήνδ' ἐμοῦσαν (this vomiting woman), Telesphorus foolishly exposed Arsinoë's embarrassing sickness.[26] The hazards of court humor are amply illustrated by Telesphorus' punishment: locked in a cage like an animal, he starved to death—possibly a just penalty for a sponging dinner guest who jokes at the expense of his host. Hetaeras similarly adapted tragic verse to expose the foibles of their interlocutors, inverting social status within the context of the vignettes that feature them, although unlike the original verse, their connotations are characteristically obscene.

[26] This pronunciation joke recalls the actor Hegelochus' famous mistake while delivering a line from Euripides' *Orestes*. His breathless delivery of γαλῆν instead of γαλήν' changed the intended meaning of the sentence from "I see the calm after the storm" to "I see the weasel after the storm." Cf. E. *Or.* 279; cf. Ar. *Ra.* 303–4; Strattis, frs. 1 and 60 K.–A.; and Sannyrion, fr. 8 K.–A.

THE LAUGHTER OF HETAERAS

Hetaera's jokes are frequently accompanied by derisive and aggressive laughter, denoted by the verb γελάω, that figures them as masculine; indeed, according to Theophrastus, such laughter is characteristic of the *kolax* (Thphr. *Char.* 2.4), the flatterer or parasite described above. In Herodotus' *Histories*, the word conveys not happiness or pleasure but rather "scorn, arrogance or self-delusion" (Lateiner 1977 and 1989, 28, n. 48). The verb very rarely occurs in connection with women in the *Deipnosophistae*: all feminine examples refer to hetaeras and most occur in Book 13. Thus the courtesans Lamia and Mania mock and reject their clients' advances with their laughter (γελάσασα, Machon 184 = 577f; Machon 255 = 579d). The close connection between the hetaera's laughter and her masculine insolence gains further support in an anecdote in which the sophisticated Lais laughs as she wittily insults the poet Euripides (ἡ δὲ γελάσασ' ἀπεκρίθη, 582d). The laughter of the courtesan Nico, who quips that Sophocles' boy favorite, Demophon, should take her πυγή and give it to Sophocles (ἡ δ' εἶπε γελάσασα, 582f), also shows a comic mastery of the situation. Similarly, Theocritus' *Idyll* 20 describes a hetaera as alternately enticing and mocking a simple herdsman, a scene that concludes with violent laughter at the rustic's expense (σοβαρόν μ' ἐγέλαξεν, 20.15).

The subversive and aggressively masculine aspects of the hetaera's laughter are tangible in another anecdote about a laughing hetaera. In Book 9, we find the appropriately named Gnathaena (Jaws) indulging in cooked testicles at a banquet. While the other women politely pretend not to notice this obscene feast (ἠκκίζετο, 384f), "man-slaying" Gnathaena heartily guffaws (ἡ δ' ἀνδροφόνος Γνάθαιν' ἀναγελάσασ' ἅμα, 384f) as she snatches up two and gulps them down. The laughter of hetaeras has a subversive effect: here it clearly induces anxiety in Gnathaena's (male) interlocutors, connected as it is with her predatory sexuality and prodigious appetite, because it potentially emasculates men even as it seduces them.

In the only other example of female laughter outside of Book 13, the courtesans Melissa and Nicion are described as laughing at the humble fare, the bowls of lentil soup, set before them at a symposium of Cynic philosophers:

> γέλωτος οὖν ἐπιρραγέντος παρῆν ἡ θεατροτορύνη Μέλισσα καὶ ἡ κυνάμυια Νίκιον· αὗται δ ἦσαν τῶν οὐκ ἀσήμων ἑταιρίδων, ἀποβλέψασαι οὖν αὗται εἰς τὰ παρακείμενα καὶ θαυμάσασαι ἐγέλων. καὶ ἡ Νίκιον ἔφη· "οὐδεὶς ὑμῶν, ἄνδρες γενειοσυλλεκτάδαι, ἰχθὺν ἐσθίει;" (157a–b).

> After a burst of laughter, the stage-pounder Melissa and that dog-fly Nicion entered; for these were very well known courtesans. Glancing with wonder at the things placed before them, they laughed. And Nicion said, "Don't any of you beard-gatherers eat fish?"

The scornful hetaera sounds a lot like one of Athenaeus' banqueters: not only does she parody Aristophanes with the word γενειοσυλλεκτάδαι (cf. στωμυλιοσυλλεκτάδη [gossip-gatherers], Ar. *Ra.* 841), she goes on to quote the epigrammatist Meleager and the philosopher Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates, advising the Cynics to "take themselves from life" (ἐξάγειν ἑαυτοὺς τοῦ βίου) for tolerating such food. The laughter of these hetaeras, like those of Book 13, thus parodies the practices and doctrines of the Cynic philosophers, namely their frugal symposia, and their discursive presence at table indirectly ridicules its primary proponent, the Cynic Cynulcus. For the philosopher has just delivered a lengthy account of the ascetic practices of the Cynics, an account that provokes the derisive laughter of everyone at the banquet (γελασάντων δὲ πάντων, 159f). As I will show in the remainder of this paper, Myrtilus deploys the discourse of hetaeras in Book 13 to much the same end.

GENRES OF COURTESANS: ATHENAEUS' SOURCES

The witticisms of hetaeras, along with those of parasites, formed a familiar literary sub-genre in classical antiquity. An anecdote recorded by Strabo exemplifies the genre: reproached for refusing to work in wool, a courtesan responds with a phallic pun, "Yet I, such as I am, have taken down three webs / masts in this short length of time" (ἐγὼ μέντοι ἡ τοιαύτη τρεῖς ἤδη καθεῖλον ἱστοὺς ἐν βραχεῖ χρόνῳ τούτῳ, Strabo 8.6.20). The joke hinges on an inversion of normative social roles: instead of weaving, the work of a respectable wife, the hetaera plies her trade in the bedroom, subduing men in an almost martial fashion. Such jokes were deemed worthy of writing down and made the rounds either through personal collections—Philip of Macedon apparently maintained a joke book filled with the amusing sayings of contemporary comedians (614d)—or in more formal tracts such as the *Chreiae* of the Hellenistic poet Machon.[27] The

[27] A native of Corinth or Sicyon, Machon spent most of his life at Alexandria where his comedies were produced. The subject matter and style of the *Chreiae* suggest the influence of both Attic Old and New Comedy, although the vocabulary is prosaic and colloquial; even the meter approximates prose rather than poetry; for a fuller account of Machon and his oeuvre, see Gow 1965, 3–24, and Kurke 2002.

parasite, Eucleides, nicknamed the Beet, occasionally uttered witty apophthegms "worthy of publication" (οὐκ ἀνάξια[28] βιβλίου, 242b), but, according to Athenaeus, the unevenness of his humor ultimately rendered him obscure.

Although it is unclear how the witticisms of hetaeras became transmitted to Athenaeus, it is likely that he consulted many of the same sources as Aelian, Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, and Pollux (Hawley 1993, 76). These works included several collections of jokes told by hetaeras, as well as those by parasites, predominantly the *Chreiae* of Machon (577d–83d), but also the *Apomnēmoneumata* of Lynceus (probably 583f, 584b–85f) as well as the *Geloia Apomnēmoneumata* of Aristodemus (possibly 585a). Indeed, Athenaeus uses the terms *chreiae*, *apophthegmata*, and *apomnēmoneumata* more or less interchangeably throughout his work (cf. 348e; 579d, 588a). Moreover, because some *chreiae* are attributed to multiple authors—for example, Machon assigns one anecdote to the courtesan Mania (263 = 578e) that Lynceus elsewhere attributes to Gnathaena (584c)—it is likely that there was a well-established oral tradition in circulation. In *chreiae*, in contrast to maxims or proverbs, stock figures such as kings, soldiers, parasites, and courtesans engage in dialogue in a familiar narrative setting.[29] The form is quite flexible, allowing for alteration, improvisation and last minute changes of venue and character (Gilula 2000, 429). By the late second century C.E., the term had a specific, technical meaning and became a regular feature of the *progymnasmata* of the imperial rhetors.[30] The extreme obscenity found in most of Machon's *Chreiae* has led to the speculation, correct in my view, that they are meant as a parody of this philosophical and rhetorical

[28] I follow Casaubon's emendation here.

[29] Hawley 1993, 76, observes that the *chreia* involves "a brief narrative setting, introducing at least one person, an attribution of at least one proper name as protagonist (often a famous individual), a question, and then a final capping answer, often in direct speech." He further argues that the apophthegm or anecdote, because brief, represented an appropriate speech genre for women. He does not, however, account for the anecdotal traditions surrounding women who are seen as violating or subverting in some way normative gender roles, such as the *Apophthegmata Lakōnika* of Plutarch or the hetaeras of Machon, not to mention the fact that many such apothegms are also attributed to powerful men. Hock and O'Neil 1986, 22–25, delineate the four characteristic features of the *chreia* as follows: it contains a saying or action; it is concise, often only one sentence in length; it is spoken in character and is applicable to everyday life. Gilula 2000, 429, identifies the basic structure of the *chreia* as an either-or question "to which the witty saying is an answer which completely ignores the alternatives offered in the question and surprisingly comes up with a third possibility."

[30] On *progymnasmata*, see Hock and O'Neil 1986.

tradition; indeed, Gow himself struggles to understand their pedagogical purpose ("highly unsuitable for the schoolroom," he remarks).[31]

As a genre, the *chreia* apparently originated in classical Athens among philosophers, sophists, and other literary figures (Hock and O'Neil 1986, 4–5); Plato even attributes a *chreia* to Sophocles (Pl. *R.* 1.329b–c). The literary genre, however, dates at least to the fourth century B.C.E., according to Diogenes Laertius, who mentions several works entitled *Chreiae* by philosophical authors of this period.[32] Indeed, he tells us that Diogenes the Cynic himself composed a *Chreiae* (D.L. 6.80). If we are to believe Diogenes Laertius, this philosopher had a reputation for witty quips that heaped scorn on his interlocutors (κατασοβαρεύσασθαι, D.L. 6.24 and *passim*), as in the following:

> ἰδὼν Ὀλυμπιονίκην εἰς ἑταίραν πυκνότερον ἀτενίζοντα, "ἴδε," ἔφη, "κριὸν Ἀρειμάνιον ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ τυχόντος κορασίου τραχηλίζεται." (D.L. 6.61)
>
> Upon seeing an Olympian victor glance repeatedly at a hetaera, he said, "See how the ram, frenzied for battle, has had his neck rung by a common girl."

Such witticisms may have served as the model for those attributed to hetaeras since they feature the same stock characters and similar kinds of role inversion. Lynceus' account of one of Phryne's witticisms beautifully illustrates the technique of philosophical parody at work in the hetaera's version of this genre: when someone poses a question (ζητουμένου) as to why wreaths are hung at the symposium, Phryne responds, "to guide the soul" (ὅτι ψυχαγωγοῦσιν, 585e), a quip that possibly plays on the *zētēmata* of the Stoics (cf. 553e–54b, 670a–e). Certainly, Myrtilus' lengthy quotation of Machon's *Chreiae* functions similarly at Athenaeus' banquet, parodying philosophers, specifically the Stoics and their pretentious discourses.

While it is clear that Machon provides the bulk of the witticisms attributed to hetaeras in the *Deipnosophistae*, the relation of Machon to his predecessor Lynceus remains unclear (Gow 1965, 19–21; Ogden 1999, n. 65–66). Certainly the difference between the two versions of the "stone"

[31] Gow 1965, 14. On Machon's *Chreiae* as a philosophical parody, see Davidson 1997, 93 and 104, and Kurke 2002.

[32] Gow 1965, 12–14; the authors mentioned by Diogenes include Aristippus (D.L. 2.85, 4.40); Demetrius of Phalerum (5.81); Hecaton the Rhodian, a follower of Panaetius (6.32); Metrocles (6.33); Diogenes (6.80); Zeno of Citium (6.91); Persaeus (7.36); and Ariston of Chios (7.163).

joke—Machon attributes it to Gnathaena (578e), Lynceus to Phryne (584c)—militates against the view that Machon borrowed it from Lynceus. In any case, Lynceus' anecdotes (583d–85e) appear less fully developed than those of Machon; they provide little in the way of dramatic setting and characterization and mostly involve quotidian puns without the graphic obscenity of Machon, as seen in the philosophical witticism of Phryne above. The subject matter of Aristodemus' *Geloia Apomnēmoneumata*, if we are to judge by Gnathaena's joke about a cistern (λάκκος), appears to have been much cruder than that of Lynceus. His account features some of the same courtesans as Machon, including Gnathaena (583f, 584b–e, 585a–b), Phryne (584d, 585e–f), Nico (584f), Callistion (585c), and Lais (585d); but to these he adds Metanira (584f), Glycera (585c–d), and Thais (585d–e).

SAYINGS OF HETAERAS

Let us turn now to the actual witticisms of hetaeras as quoted by Myrtilus. Most hinge on an obscene pun that deflects a demeaning sexual request and thus puts the interlocutor in his place.[33] Through her witticisms, the hetaera gains the upper hand over her male interlocutors; she literally "wins" in the discursive exchanges of the symposium, playing the part of the joke teller rather than serving as the target of the humor. My larger point, however, concerns the function of these jokes at Athenaeus' table. By placing the speech of courtesans in Myrtilus' mouth, the author portrays him as deploying an erotic and comic discourse that disrupts the orderly progression of sympotic conversation. Just like the courtesans he ventriloquizes, he ultimately triumphs, reducing his competitor to a mere "dog" (611c–d).

The late fourth-century courtesan Gnathaena had the widest reputation for her humor; she also reputedly composed a literary treatise, *Nomos Sussistikos* ("Table Manners"), that outlined, probably parodically, sympotic protocol for her lovers.[34] Other examples of her wit occur in the

[33] Hawley 1993, 77, divides their quips into the following groups: witty puns (578e, 584d, 580d–e, 582 a, 584b–85f); literary or political allusions (579e–80a, 582c–d; 584); sexual double entendres (579d, 580b, 581f); and blatant obscenity (580f).

[34] Gow 1965, 107. According to Aristodemus (= 585b), Gnathaena wrote a treatise on dinner parties (νόμον συσσιτικὸν συνέγραψεν, καθ' ὃν δεῖ τοὺς ἐραστὰς ὡς αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα εἰσιέναι, κατὰ ζῆλον τῶν τὰ τοιαῦτα συνταξαμένων φιλοσόφων). It apparently amounted to 323 lines, according to Callimachus in his *Nomoi* (fr. 433 = 585b) and began ὅδε ὁ νόμος ἴσος ἐγράφη καὶ ὅμοιος. Hawley 1993, 77 argues, as does Davidson 1997, 104, that Athenaeus by referring to Gnathaena's treatise parodies such works. See also Kurke 2002.

Apomnēmoneumata of the Samian Lynceus (584b) and in the *Geloia Apomnēmoneumata* of Aristodemus (585a). Her special gift perhaps reflects her status as a crone, a character type frequently associated with scurrilous joking in Attic Old Comedy; indeed, at one point she is referred to as "almost a coffin" (ὁμολογουμένη σορός, 580c).[35] Such verbal talents apparently ran in the family, as her granddaughter or daughter, Gnathaenion (little Gnathaena), is also quoted numerous times in Book 13.[36] Lastly, many of the rejoinders are attributed to the quick-witted Lamia, a well-known *aulētris* (577d) associated with Demetrius Poliorcetes, the Macedonian king famous for his numerous liaisons with courtesans.

TRAGIC ALLUSIONS

The many witticisms that involve tragic allusions not only reinforce the association of *paideia* with the Greek hetaera, they also perversely convert the hetaera, an outsider and normally a foreigner, into the purveyor of classical Athenian literary culture. The parodic send-up of Oedipus' riddle in the fragment of Anaxilas discussed above exemplifies the genre in which a hetaera obscenely burlesques a tragic idea or even parodies tragic language. For example, Gnathaena, asked to pay the expenses for a drinking party in advance, replies to the slave messenger of her lover Andronicus, the tragic actor, "Cursed slave, what word hast thou spoken!" (ὀλόμενε παίδων, ἔφη, ποῖον εἴρηκας λόγον, 584d), a line from an unattributed tragic play (fr. 837 TGF[2]). Here pure Attic speech is put in the mouth of the person least likely to speak it—a foreigner and outsider. The gesture is doubly ironic as every speaker at Athenaeus' table serves to negotiate his or her own identity in relation to this same cultural past, with Ulpian the Atticist serving as the guardian of the pure, classical Greek language.

[35] For a Roman parallel, consider that Julia apparently told her jokes when she was 38, which was on the verge of old age in classical antiquity; see Richlin 1992, 70.

[36] Prostitution appears to have been an intergenerational practice transmitted from mother to daughter as Athenaeus and his sources regularly refer to the matrilineal descent of courtesans (and there is some inscriptional evidence to support this; for which see Ogden 1996, 94–95). Thus we hear of Damasandra/Timandra, mother of Lais the Younger and of Theodote (535c; 574e); Nannion, mother of Corone 2 (587b); and Corone 1, the mother of Callistion (583a); the Epicurean Leontion, the mother of Danae (593b–d); Gnathaena, mother or grandmother of Gnathaenion (585a); and Thalassis, mother of Glycera (586c). Nannion's daughter, Corone 2, earned the sobriquet "Grandma" because of her inherited profession: "Now there was a daughter of Nannion named Corone who acquired the name Tethe (Grandmother) because of her triple prostitution" (ἐκ τριπορνείας, 587b). In Plautus' *Cistellaria*, the procuress Syra speaks of bearing a daughter from a transient union and training her in the arts of prostitution (Pl. *Cist.* 39–41).

Most of the hetaera's tragic rejoinders revolve around an obscene double meaning and borrow much from the comic technique of tragic parody. The first *chreia* quoted by Myrtilus depicts the *aulētris* Lamia delivering a ribald riposte to the infamous Macedonian king, Demetrius Poliorcetes:

> ὑπερβολῇ δὲ τῆς Λεαίνης σχῆμά τι
> περαινομένης εὖ παρά τε τῷ Δημητρίῳ
> εὐημερούσης, φασὶ καὶ τὴν Λάμιαν
> τὸν βασιλέ' εὐμελῶς κελητίσαι ποτέ
> ἐπαινεθῆναί θ'· ἡ δὲ τοῦτ' ἀπεκρίθη
> "πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ Λέαιναν, εἰ βούλει, κράτει." (Machon 168–73 = 577d)
>
> When Leaena had executed a certain position
> extremely well and had found favor with Demetrius,
> they say Lamia also once rode gracefully atop the king,
> and thus won his praise. And she retorted as follows,
> "In view of that, take on Leaena too if you like!"

The joke plays on two different sexual *schēmata* associated with each prostitute and also with specific animals. The double meaning inheres in the pun on Leaena, another famous courtesan associated with Demetrius, and λέαινα, the Greek word for lion and for the lioness *schēma*, a position in which the woman crouched with her posterior raised.[37] The specialty of her rival, Lamia, is the antithesis of this pose: she rides atop the man equestrian-style, a *schēma* considered demeaning even for prostitutes.[38] On another level, the line itself alludes to a climactic scene in Euripides' *Medea*, in which Medea says to Jason, "In view of that, call me a lion, if you wish" (πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ λέαιναν, εἰ βούλῃ, κάλει, E. *Med.* 1358). But here the hetaera has modified the word at line end from κάλει to κράτει. Moreover, the dramatic context of the line reinforces the idea of female discursive dominance: raised aloft in the position of *dea ex machina*, Medea utters these lines over her emasculated husband just before departing in her dragon chariot.[39]

[37] On the lion position, cf. Ar. *Lys.* 231, οὐ στήσομαι λέαιν' ἐπὶ τυροκνήστιδος, and the scholion, σχῆμα ἀκόλαστον καὶ ἑταιρικόν; it frequently appears on vases and hand mirrors, for which see Stewart 1997, 177–81. For a visual representation of a crouching lion, see Boardman 1986.

[38] For another link between Lamia and Leaena, cf. 253a, where according to Democharες, the Athenians supposedly built temples to Aphrodite Leaena and Aphrodite Lamia as a compliment to Demetrius. On κελητίζω, see Heath 1986; Henry 1992, 264; on its use in this anecdote, see Davidson 1997, 196–97, and Kurke 2002.

[39] For the discursive dominance of Medea in Euripides' play, see McClure 1999a; for its application to Machon, see Kurke 2002, who sees it as a political declaration of "the

In another vignette that features Demetrius, the courtesan Mania makes similar use of tragic allusion when she consents to Demetrius' request for her ass:

> αἰτουμένην λέγουσι τὴν πυγήν ποτε
> ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Μανίαν Δημητρίου
> ἀνταξιῶσαι δωρεὰν καὐτόν τινα.
> δόντος δ' ἐπιστρέψασα μετὰ μικρὸν λέγει
> "'Αγαμέμνονος παῖ, νῦν ἐκεῖν' ἔξεστί σοι . . ." (Machon 226–30 = 579a).
>
> They say that when king Demetrius once asked
> for Mania's ass, she demanded a gift in return from him.
> After he had given it, she turned around and after a little while said,
> "Child of Agamemnon, now it is possible for you to. . . ."

Her retort alludes to a passage in Sophocles' *Electra* where the Paedagogus says to Orestes, "Child, now it is possible for you to see those things for which you were always eager" ('Αγαμέμνονος παῖ, νῦν ἐκεῖν' ἔξεστί σοι / παρόντι λεύσσειν, ὧν πρόθυμος ἦσθ' ἀεί, S. *El.* 2). The joke, however, resides in the omission of the infinitive λεύσσειν of the original text: Demetrius does not ask merely to *see* her ass but rather alludes to anal intercourse.[40] The anecdote receives additional frisson if one considers that Mania may be quoting the parodic lines of the wife of the tragic actor Theodorus who refused to allow him into her bed until he returned victorious from a tragic competition (Gow 1965, 103; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 737b).

Play on tragic phrases similarly occurs in the Gnathaenion's retort to Gnathaena when the latter pressures her to reconcile with a lover:

> ἡ δ' εἶπε, "μῆτερ, πῶς, ἔφη, μέλλω φιλεῖν
> τὸ μηδὲν ὠφέλημα, τὸν ὑπὸ τὰς στέγας
> τὸ κοῖλον Ἄργος δωρεὰν θέλοντ' ἔχειν." (Machon 384–86 = 582a)
>
> Mother, she said, how can I kiss
> that good-for-nothing, one who wants to possess
> under one roof all hollow Argos as a gift.

The phrase "hollow Argos" comes from a passage in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* in which Oedipus curses his son Polyneices (S. *OC* 1387; cf. 378) but here it euphemistically refers to her own body. The phrase τὸ μηδὲν ὠφέλημα may also be taken from a tragedy while στέγη puns on

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superiority of a quintessentially Athenian poetic genre to the crude physical demands of Athens' boorish conqueror."

[40] Thanks are owed to Peter White for his trenchant clarification of this joke.

house and brothel.[41] By taking a tragic phrase or statement out of context and imbuing it with obscene meaning, the speaker parodies the tragic genre in a manner familiar from comedy while at the same time deflecting the demeaning requests of her clients.

Elsewhere the courtesan pokes fun at the literary pretensions of dramatic poets and actors, again turning the tables on her male interlocutors. In a joke that apparently made the rounds, Gnathaena bests her lover, the comic poet Diphilus:

> παρὰ Γναθαίνῃ Δίφιλος πίνων ποτέ
> "ψυχρόν γ', ἔφη, τἀγγεῖον, ὦ Γνάθαιν', ἔχεις."
> "τῶν σῶν γάρ, εἶπεν, ἐπιμελῶς, ὦ Δίφιλε,
> εἰς αὐτό γ' ἀεὶ δραμάτων ἐμβάλλομεν." (Machon 258–61 = 579e).
>
> Drinking once at Gnathaena's house, Diphilus remarked,
> "That vessel you have is cold, Gnathaena."
> "That's because we always deliberately put in
> some of your plays," she said.

As a term of literary criticism, ψυχρός denotes something tedious and devoid of humor, so we hear of the "frigid" witticisms of the parasite Eucleides (242b).[42] Although there is no evidence for any obscene usage of ἀγγεῖον, it is nonetheless tempting to interpret both quips as professional put-downs.

Indeed, Machon's subsequent retelling of the anecdote implies as much; here the poet represents the rejoinder as an attempt to conceal a different lover's inferior gifts of snow and cheap fish:

> αἰσχυνομένη τὰ δῶρα μή τις καταμάθῃ
> φυλαττομένη τε πολὺ μάλιστα Δίφιλον
> μὴ δῷ δίκην μετὰ ταῦτα κωμῳδουμένη . . . . (Machon 271–73 = 579f)
>
> Ashamed that someone might learn about the gifts,
> and being especially worried about Diphilus,
> in case he should pay her back by putting her in a comedy . . .

[41] For this view, see Gow 1965, 124, who relates τὸ μηδὲν ὠφέλημα to A. *Pr.* 613, ὦ κοινὸν ὠφέλημα θνητοῖσιν φανείς; cf. E. *Tr.* 703. He also notes that στεγός commonly refers to a brothel.

[42] On ψυχρός as a feature of dramatic poetry, cf. Ar. *Th.* 170, ὁ δ' αὖ Θέογνις ψυχρὸς ὢν ψυχρῶς ποιεῖ; the frigidity of his tragedies apparently earned him the nickname Χιών; cf. Ar. *Ach.* 138–40 and the scholion to v. 11. For the "frigid" jokes of parasites generally, see Thphr. *Char.* 2.4.

In this exchange, as in the previous version, the two speakers vie for discursive control: Diphilus, through his comedies and his public humiliation of the hetaera, and Gnathaena through her witticisms at table.[43] After a long setup, we finally get the punchline: overjoyed at his large serving, Diphilus remarks,

> "νὴ τὴν' Αθηνᾶν καὶ θεούς, ψυχρόν γ', ἔφη,
> Γνάθαιν', ἔχεις τὸν λάκκον ὁμολογουμένως."
> ἡ δ' εἶπε "τῶν σῶν δραμάτων γὰρ ἐπιμελῶς
> εἰς αὐτὸν αἰεὶ τοὺς προλόγους ἐμβάλλομεν." (Machon 281–84 = 580a)
>
> "By Athena and the gods," he said,
> "your cistern sure is *cold*!"
> And she replied, "That's because we always
> deliberately put in some of your prologues!"

The use of λάκκος here, a word frequently paired with πρωκτός in Attic Old Comedy, clearly shows the obscene intent of Diphilus' remark. And yet, Machon gives the hetaera the last word by having her counter the poet's implied obscenity with an insult about his work. Moreover, the put-downs that temporarily place the hetaera in the dominant discursive position also cast the male in a sexually, and grammatically, passive role: Diphilus is said to be loved by her (ὑπ' αὐτῆς . . . ἀγαπώμενος, Machon 265 = 579e) and is even designated her most esteemed *erōmenos* (τιμώμενος μάλιστα τῶν ἐρωμένων, Machon 264 = 579e).[44]

Diphilus appears to have been a frequent target of prostitutes' ridicule: in an anecdote ascribed to Lynceus, Gnathaena berates the poet for his failure in another dramatic competition:

> ἐν ἀγῶνι οὖν ποτε αὐτὸν ἀσχημονήσαντα σφόδρα ἀρθῆναι ἐκ τοῦ θεάτρου συνέβη καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον ἐλθεῖν πρὸς τὴν Γνάθαιναν. κελεύοντος οὖν τοῦ Διφίλου ὑπονίψαι τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ τὴν Γνάθαιναν, ἡ δὲ "τί γάρ, εἶπεν, οὐκ ἠρμένος ἥκεις;" (583f)
>
> It once happened that Diphilus, disgracefully defeated in a dramatic competition, was "raised" out of the theater but he went to Gnathaena's house

[43] The comic poet Philippides also pilloried Gnathaena for her gluttony in one of his plays (fr. 5 K.–A.); see Gow 1965, 8–9. Similarly, at Alciphr. 4.2.5 the hetaera Glycera fears that she will have to endure Menander's λοιδορία on the comic stage.

[44] Trying to solve this difficulty, Gow 1965, 107 suggests that ἐρωμένων has a middle rather than passive meaning; on p. 108, he remarks that the verb ἀγαπάω in these contexts normally has an active meaning and thus applies to the male, not to the hetaera, as in Anaxil. fr. 22 K.–A., ὅστις ἀνθρώπων ἑταίραν ἠγάπησε.

> nonetheless. When Diphilus enjoined her to wash his feet, she replied, "Why should I, when you come to me not being raised up?"
>
> (Trans. adapted from Gulick)

The poet's public humiliation in the theater effects a status reversal, rendering him unworthy of the servile attention that courtesans typically lavish upon their lovers, a displacement further compounded by the hetaera's witticism. The joke, which was probably a standard one, plays on the idea of the poet's literary creation, the hetaera, a stock figure in comedy, "talking back" to her creator. Menander, returning home "down on his luck," perhaps after a similar professional failure, endures the obscene ridicule of Glycera, also one of his own characters. After he rejects the hot milk she offers, the hetaera quips, "Get rid of the upper part and use what's below" (ἀποφύσα, εἶπε, καὶ τῷ κάτω χρῶ, 585c). The joke plays on the double sense of γραῦς as old woman and the wrinkled scum that forms on the surface of boiled milk.

One last anecdote represents an encounter between the fifth-century hetaera Lais and the poet Euripides in which she mocks him with a line from his own play in much the same manner as the god Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs* when he awards the prize to Aeschylus (Ar. *Ran.* 1471). Upon seeing the poet in a garden with his writing tablet and stylus, the hetaera engages in the following exchange:

> "ἀπόκριναι, φησίν, ὦ ποιητά μοι,
> τί βουλόμενος ἔγραψας ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ
> 'ἔρρ', αἰσχροποιέ;'" καταπλαγεὶς δ' Εὐριπίδης
> τὴν τόλμαν αὐτῆς "Σὺ γάρ, ἔφη, τίς εἶ, γύναι;
> οὐκ αἰσχροποιός;" ἡ δὲ γελάσασ' ἀπεκρίθη·
> "Τί δ' αἰσχρόν, εἰ μὴ τοῖσι χρωμένοις δοκεῖ;" (Machon 405–10 = 582d)
>
> "Tell me, my poet,
> why did write in your tragedy
> 'Away shameful doer?'" Whereupon Euripides, amazed
> at her audacity, said, "What are you, woman?
> Not a shameful doer?" And she, laughing, retorted,
> "What is shameful, if it does not seem so to the doer?"

The hetaera here asks the poet why he used αἰσχροποιός of Medea in Jason's elaborate denunciation of her (E. *Med.* 1346), although implying an obscene usage. With ἀπόκριναι, Lais invites the poet to deliver his own witticism in this conventional game of ripostes; he responds by turning the tables on the hetaera, but she (literally) has the last laugh.

Lais brilliantly responds with a famous line from his play, *Aeolus* (fr. 19 TGF[2]), that probably referred to the incest of Macareus with his sister Canace and in any case expressed his penchant for moral relativism.[45] We see again the same comic procedure at work: the hetaera uses laughter and witticisms to put a powerful and derisive male interlocutor in his place by using his own inclinations and doctrines against him. And as we saw in the earlier parody of Euripides' *Medea*, the verse comes from the final scene of the tragedy when Jason's and Medea's positions are reversed.[46] The ability to quote Euripides in the post-classical era served as the consummate mark of *paideia*. Plutarch in his account of the Sicilian expedition states that the Sicilians consigned to the quarries all Athenians captured in war except those who could recite Euripides (Plu. *Nic.* 19.2).[47] The close association between classical Greek *paideia* and the poetry of Euripides during the second century C.E. reinforces the idea of the educated Athenian hetaera as the purveyor of classical Attic culture.

RIDICULE OF THE LOWER CLASSES

Beyond tragic poets, the targets of the hetaeras' abuse tended to be stock, lower-class characters such as soldiers, rogues (μαστιγίας, 585f), parasites, actors, athletes, and craftsmen. In one such story, a deserter, the Αὐτόμολος,[48] holds a drinking party for his friends—one assumes that these are the free-loaders, the *asymboloi* that so frequently populate the dinner parties of the rich and famous:

> εἶναι δοκῶν αὐτόμολος ἄνθρωπος ξένος
> καὶ παρεπιδημήσας Ἀθήνησίν ποτε
> τὴν Μανίαν μετεπέμψαθ', ὅσον ᾔτησε δούς.
> εἰς τὸν πότον δ' ἦν συμπαρειληφώς τινας
> ἐκ τῆς πόλεως τῶν ἐπιγελᾶν εἰθισμένων
> ἅπαντα τοῖς τρέφουσιν αἰεὶ πρὸς χάριν·

[45] On this passage, see Gow 1965, 128; on the line from Euripides' *Aeolus*, cf. Ar. *Ra.* 1475, τί δ' αἰσχρόν, ἢν μὴ τοῖς θεωμένοις δοκῇ, and Plut. *Mor.* 33c.

[46] Following a scholion, Gow 1965, 128, believes this episode may have actually taken place. But the fact that such dialogues appear to have been popular during the Second Sophistic period—Musonius, for instance, similarly engages in a conversation with Euripides about slavery—militates against the idea that they ever actually took place; see Whitmarsh 2001, 278.

[47] I am grateful to C. A. Faraone for drawing my attention to this passage.

[48] Gow 1965, 104, takes the phrase αὐτόμολος ἄνθρωπος ξένος to refer to "the typical boorish soldier of New Comedy." In any case, the term ἄνθρωπος denotes contempt.

βουλόμενος εἶναι γλαφυρὸς ἀστεῖός θ' ἅμα,
τῆς Μανίας ἄριστα παιζούσης σφόδρα
ἀνισταμένης τε πολλάκις, εἰς δασύποδα
αὐτὴν ἐπικροῦσαι βουλόμενος "πρὸς τῶν θεῶν
μειράκια, τί δοκεῖ τῶν ἀγρίων ὑμῖν ποτε
ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι τάχιστα θηρίον τρέχειν;"
ἡ Μανία δ' "αὐτόμολος, ὦ βέλτιστε," ἔφη.
μετὰ ταῦτα δ' ὡς εἰσῆλθε πάλιν ἡ Μανία,
τὸν αὐτόμολον ἔσκωπτε ῥίψασπίν τ' ἔφη
αὐτὸν γεγονέναι προσβολῆς οὔσης ποτέ. (Machon 231–46 = 579a–b).

A foreign man, who seemed to be a deserter,
was staying in Athens once, and sent for Mania,
paying her whatever she asked.
To his drinking party, he had invited some others,
those from the city always accustomed to laugh
with their hosts at everything out of gratitude.
He wished to show himself both subtle and witty,
while Mania bandied about her wittiest remarks,
even though she often left the room. Wishing to jeer at her
as a scurrying hare, the deserter said, "By the gods,
boys, which of the wild beasts in the mountains
seems to you to run the fastest?"
And Mania answered, "Why the deserter, my good man."
When Mania had entered the room once more after this,
she mocked the deserter and said that once
he had been a shield-caster during an attack.

The adjective ἀστεῖος links the table banter of the parasitic deserter to that of the hetaera and thus sets up a game of competitive ripostes between the two. With her verbal play at its best—and note its affinities with the table banter of Athenaeus' sophists (ἄριστα παιζούσης, Machon 238 = 579b)—the hetaera Mania wins the contest with her witty solution to the riddle; in Gow's words, she "catches the man's jest, turns it against him, and embroiders her suggestion" (Gow 1965, 245). Her joke unmans the deserter by unmasking his martial cowardice and deflates his own attempts at witticisms.

Another *chreia* depicts the hetaera Mania as the lover of two rival pancratiasts. Taking up with one pancratiast while serving as the common-law wife (γαμετῆς τρόπον γυναικός) of the other, she incurs the abuse of her cuckolded "husband" (μοιχευομένην). To his complaints, Mania quips:

"μηθέν, φησί, σοί,
ψυχή, μελέτω· μαθεῖν γὰρ αἰσθέσθαι θ' ἅμα
'Ολυμπιονικῶν νυκτὸς ἀθλητῶν δυεῖν
πληγὴν παρὰ πληγὴν τί δύναταί ποτ' ἤθελον." (Machon 222–25 = 578f)

Darling, don't be concerned. For I just wanted to learn and ascertain what two athletes, victors at Olympia, could do, stroke for stroke, in a single night. (Trans. adapted from Gulick.)

Here the double entendre resides in the play on πληγή, a word that can refer both to athletic and sexual activity in Attic Old Comedy. At the same time, the sports metaphor effectively turns the hetaera into the athletic victor able to take on two opponents at once. Gnathaenion also deploys a similar equation between sexual and athletic conquest in her response to a passing wrestler (παλαιστής) in another anecdote. When he attempted to pass her retinue as she processed to the Peiraeus and threatened to throw her down if her party did not get out of his way, she replied, "You poor fool, not you sir! For that is something you have not yet done!" (ὦ τάλαν, μὴ δῆτ' ἄνερ· / οὐδέποτε γὰρ τοῦτ' ἐστί σοι πεπραγμένον, Machon 400–401 = 582c). By mocking his failure in the public arena, the hetaera's repartee denigrates and even emasculates her interlocutor.

In an act of betrayal that involves multiple status inversions, the aging Gnathaena, who has now taken up residence with the tragic actor Andronicus, comes out of retirement to offer her services to a bronzesmith for a large amount of gold. The low status of this character is indicated by the phrase ἀνάγωγος ὢν δὲ καὶ βάναυσος παντελῶς ("Being ill-bred and one who works with his hands," Machon 358 = 581d) and by the fact that he sits around gossiping in a cobbler's shop. When the rumor gets back to Andronicus that the hetaera had engaged in the "horse" position with the bronzesmith, a *schēma* she had refused to perform with him (καθιππάσθαι, Machon 362 = 581d; cf. κελητίσαι Machon 171 = 577d), he reviles her (λοιδορούμενος, 581e). In the eyes of the actor, the hetaera's willingness to perform this position with just anyone constitutes an act of subversion since it elevates socially marginal figures, such as smiths and rogues, to the level of aristocracy (ἐντρυφᾶν, 581e).[49] The hetaera in effect aids and abets this process of disrupting status boundaries by renting out her body and allowing equal access to all. Nonetheless, her quip to the

[49] Kurke 2002 finds an allusion to political disenfranchisement: in parting the bronzesmith from his gold, the hetaera symbolically "casts him out of the citizen body" and thus restores normative social hierarchies.

cuckolded Andronicus restores those boundaries by insulting the smith and reasserting her physical and discursive control over this degrading act: "I cleverly contrived to touch the part of his person which projects farthest and is smallest" (ἐφιλοσόφησά θ', ἵν' ἄκρον ὡς μάλιστα καί / ἐλάχιστον αὐτοῦ περιλάβω τοῦ σώματος, Machon 374–75 = 581f). The verb φιλοσοφέω injects an element of bathos: the lofty thoughts of the hetaera contrast with her degrading sexual activities. The use of repartee to deflect a client's demeaning sexual demand while also exposing his baseness is also found in another of Mania's rejoinders: when a scoundrel (πονηρῶν τις), upon taking her in his turn, asks, "Do you wish to come together from on top or behind?" (πότερ' ἄνω θέλεις / ἐλθοῦσ' ἅμα βαλεῖν ἢ κάτω . . .), she laughingly responds, "On top . . . that you not steal my hair ornament while I am prone" (γελάσασ' "ἄνω / . . . . δέδοικά σε / μή μου προπεσούσης τοὐμπλοκιον ὑπεκτράγῃς, Machon 255–57 = 579d).

Another anecdote, condemned as "grossly corrupt and the point hardly intelligible" by Gow (1965, 112), seems to contain an obscene pun that functions as a put-down of another marginal character. Upon learning that her partner, a μαστιγίας, allegedly received the scars on his back after falling into a funeral pyre, Gnathaena quips, "Yes, by the dear Demeter, and rightly did you flail yourself, since you are over-sexed" ("ναὶ τὴν φίλην Δήμητρα, δικαίως τοι δέρος / ἄνθρωπε, φησίν, ἐξεδάρης ἀκόλαστος ὤν, Machon 293–94 = 580b).[50] Although Gow rightly points out that the term ἀκόλαστος normally refers to sexual incontinence, he misses the sense of ἐκδέρω; not only does it mean to flay or skin, but it possibly refers to masturbation or even homosexual rape, as it does in Attic Old Comedy.[51] Through her jest, the hetaera exposes not only the rogue's lack of masculine self-control, but also his lower-class status as a criminal worthy of whipping.

The puns and rejoinders of older hetaeras like Gnathaena may convey their predatory sexuality in a gesture that renders men as the objects of erotic appraisal. Old women are typically depicted as lecherous and prone to obscenity in Greek literature, from Iambe in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* to the three crones at the end of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* (976ff.) who embed obscene double entendres in legal language as they quarrel over sexual access to the Youth. The elderly

[50] I have followed Gulick in keeping the emendation of Capps, τοι δέρος, instead of the τοιγαρ of manuscript A.

[51] In Aristophanes' *Wasps*, the verb refers to anal rape (προσαγαγὼν πρὸς τὴν ἐλάαν ἐξέδειρ' εὖ κἀνδρικῶς, Ar. *V.* 450), while elsewhere it denotes male arousal; cf. Ar. *Lys.* 158, 739 and 953; *Av.* 365; *Nu.* 442; on the verb generally, see Henderson 1991, 167.

Gnathaena delivers some of the coarsest humor in the book in her exchange with another lower class character, a young butcher's boy:

εἶτ' ἰδοῦσα κατὰ τύχην
ἱστῶντα κρεοπώλην τιν' ἀστεῖον πάνυ
τῇ θ' ἡλικίᾳ σφόδρα νέον "ὦ πρὸς τῶν θεῶν,
μειράκιον, ὁ καλός, φησί, πῶς ἵστης; φράσον."
ὁ δὲ μειδιάσας, "κύβδ', ἔφη, τριωβόλου."
"τίς δ' οὐπιτρέψων ἐστί σοι, φησίν, τάλαν,
ὄντα γ' ἐν' Αθήναις Καρικοῖς χρῆσθαι σταθμοῖς;"
(Machon 304–10 = 580c–d)

Upon seeing by chance
a butcher boy standing at the scales, very pretty
and young in age, Gnathaena said, "By the gods,
boy, the good looking one, tell me, how do you do your weighing?"
The boy smiled and said, "From behind, for three obols."
"But who will allow you, poor fool,
to use Carian measures in Athens?"

In this exchange, the crone's attempt to turn the boy into an object of erotic appraisal is met by a counter proposition that states a price of three obols. As in all of Machon's *Chreiae*, however, the hetaera has the last word as she "measures" the butcher boy against Athenian social and sexual standards in a complex pun that alludes to the sexual licentiousness of the Carians. In a similar act of objectification, Gnathaena elsewhere ridicules a homely boy, described as skinny and dark (ἰσχνὸν πάνυ / καὶ μέλανα λεπτόν θ', Machon 319–20 = 580e), by comparing him to Adonis (ἔσκωπτεν εἰς Ἄδωνιν), a witticism that may allude to the types of jokes uttered by the hetaeras celebrating the Adonia (McClure 1999b, 216, 223, 254 and n. 165, 264).

HETAERAS AT ATHENAEUS' TABLE

The masculinized hetaeras of Machon and Lynceus bear little resemblance to the companions who flatter their clients with sweet nothings depicted by Ephippus; their laughter is raucous, their jokes, while at times sophisticated, are basically crude. They belong instead to a subversive and parodic comic discourse that exposes the objects of their ridicule as depraved and unmanly, lacking in the self-control necessary for participation in the classical Athenian polis. And although these hetaeras inhabit a shadowy demi-monde of cobbler shops, marketplaces, private

symposia, and gardens, they nonetheless threaten to breach the status boundaries of gender and class. In this regard they resemble other lower class comic characters such as parasites and jesters, figures with whom kings and poets rubbed elbows, and exchanged jokes, at court and table. But in the hands of the comic poets, to say nothing of historians with a flair for the theatrical, association with such marginal figures, female or male, called into question the status and manhood of the men who were their subjects. A similar dynamic obtains at Athenaeus' table: as ventriloquized by Myrtilus, the hetaera's witticisms form the heart of a parodic discourse intended to put Cynulcus, and philosophers generally, in their place. This tactic is encapsulated in a fictionalized exchange between the hetaera Glycera and the Hellenistic philosopher, Stilpo, that follows Myrtilus' discussion of courtesans and *paideia*:

> κατηγοροῦντος γοῦν ποτε Στίλπωνος Γλυκέρας παρὰ πότον ὡς διαφθειρούσης τοὺς νέους, ὥς φησι Σάτυρος ἐν τοῖς Βίοις, ὑποτυχοῦσα ἡ Γλυκέρα "τὴν αὐτήν, ἔφη, ἔχομεν αἰτίαν, ὦ Στίλπων. σέ τε γὰρ λέγουσιν διαφθείρειν τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντάς σοι ἀνωφελῆ καὶ ἐριστικὰ σοφίσματα διδάσκοντα, ἐμέ τε ὡσαύτως ἐρωτικά. μηθὲν οὖν διαφέρειν ἐπιτριβομένοις καὶ κακῶς πάσχουσιν ἢ μετὰ φιλοσόφου ζῆν ἢ ἑταίρας." (Satyrus *FGrH* 3.164 = 584a)
>
> To Stilpo's accusation at a drinking party that she corrupted young men, as Satyrus says in his *Lives*, Glycera responded, "We incur the same blame, Stilpo. For they say that you corrupt all that meet you by teaching them worthless, eristic sophistries, while I likewise teach them erotic ones. It makes no difference, therefore, to people who are utterly destroyed and down on their luck, whether they live in the company of a philosopher or a courtesan." (Trans. adapted from Gulick.)

Glycera, in a manner similar to the jokes discussed above, deflates the criticism of the philosopher by equating her art with his; indeed, the verb διαφθείρω is thematic in descriptions of the harmful effects of encounters with prostitutes (cf. 567c). So, too, Myrtilus informs us that the Romans expelled their sophists, a term used interchangeably with philosopher in Book 13, on the grounds that they corrupted the youth (διαφθείροντας τοὺς νέους, 610f). Given Stilpo's associations with Socratic and Cynic philosophy, Myrtilus here deploys the discourse of the prostitute as a direct invective against Cynulcus.

Moreover, Myrtilus uses the element of *paideia* exhibited by the witticisms of hetaeras, especially those examples that deploy tragic verse, to parody Cynulcus' affected scorn for the literary tradition. Thus in an early exchange, the *grammatikos* chides the philosopher for his lack of

erudition: "How gauche you are, and boorish, and given to foul language . . . whom the Muses have taught left-handed letters" (ὡς σκαιὸς εἶ κἄγροικος αἰσχροεπῶν. . . . ἐδίδαξαν ἀριστερὰ γράμματα Μοῦσαι, 571a–b). Myrtilus even goes so far as to accuse the Cynic of hating literature in his final diatribe: "Then am I not right in hating all of you philosophers, you who hate literature?" (εἶτ' οὐκ ἐγὼ δικαίως πάντας ὑμᾶς τοὺς φιλοσόφους μισῶ μισοφιλολόγους ὄντας, 610d). His account of Epicurus similarly uses the courtesan Leontion to expose the philosopher's lack of education.[52] Epicurus, himself "uninitiated in *paideia*" (παιδείας ἀμύητος, 588a) and given to praise philosophers "cleansed of all *paideia*" (καθαρὸς πάσης παιδείας, 588a), consorts with the notorious hetaera and "philosopher" Leontion:

> οὗτος οὖν ὁ Ἐπίκουρος οὐ Λεόντιον εἶχεν ἐρωμένην τὴν ἐπὶ ἑταιρείᾳ διαβόητον γενομένην; ἡ δὲ οὐδ' ὅτε φιλοσοφεῖν ἤρξατο ἐπαύσατο ἑταιροῦσα, πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς Ἐπικουρείοις συνῆν ἐν τοῖς κήποις, Ἐπικούρῳ δὲ καὶ ἀναφανδόν. (588b)
>
> Didn't this same Epicurus keep Leontion as his mistress, the woman who had become famous for being a hetaera? Not even when she began to study philosophy, did she cease being a hetaera, but consorted with all the Epicureans in the Gardens, and even in full view of Epicurus.

As the ultimate symbol of pleasure, the hetaera pokes fun at the principles behind Epicurean doctrine and uncovers the foolishness of the philosopher himself (588a–b). At the same time, Leontion's presence in the garden parodies their practice of including women in their circle. Thus she turns the precepts of the Epicureans against them, in much the same way as Lais' fictive encounter with Euripides. Myrtilus' encomium of hetaeras, it appears, actually functions as a diatribe against philosophers.

In his final words, Cynulcus attempts to confute this discourse of erotic *paideia* by denouncing the erudition of the *grammatikos*:

> "πολυμαθημοσύνης, τῆς οὐ κενεώτερον οὐδέν," Ἵππων ἔφη ὁ ἄθεος. ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἡράκλειτος ὁ θεῖός φησι· "πολυμαθίη νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει." καὶ ὁ Τίμων δὲ ἔφη·
>
> ἐν δὲ πλατυσμὸς
> πολυμαθημοσύνης, τῆς οὐ κενεώτερον ἄλλο.

[52] Apparently a famous anecdote in antiquity, for which see Brendel 1970, 33 and n. 36; cf. D.L. 10.4; Alciphr. 4.17 and Pliny 35.9.

> τί γὰρ ὄφελος τῶν τοσούτων ὀνομάτων, ὦ γραμματικέ, πάντων ἐπιτρῖψαι μᾶλλον ἢ σωφρονίσαι δυναμένων τοὺς ἀκούοντας; (610b–c)
>
> "Erudition—there is nothing more empty than this," said Hippon the atheist. But even the godlike Heracleitus says, "Erudition does not teach common sense." And Timon also said, "There is nothing more empty than boasting of erudition." For what is the use of all these names, you grammarian, more to wear down than to make moderate your listeners?

Since the diners have already endured the ridiculous *polymathia* of Cynulcus on the subject of lentils earlier in the evening (156b–58d), one assumes that the philosopher finds fault not so much with Myrtilus' pedantry as with his subject matter. An account of names, he suggests, should more properly consist of those of the Greek heroes shut up in the Trojan horse or the companions of Odysseus devoured by the Cyclops or the Laistrygonians, rather than those of hetaeras. Instead, he argues, Myrtilus continually quotes the historian Phylarchus: "that in the towns of Ceos one will find neither hetaeras nor flute girls" (ὅτι ἐν ταῖς Κείων πόλεσιν οὔτε ἑταίρας οὔτε αὐλητρίδας ἰδεῖν ἔστι, 610d).

At the conclusion of his speech, Myrtilus returns in ring form to the aberrant passions of philosophers just as he had earlier indicted the Stoics for their homoerotic proclivities in his opening salvo (565a):

> Ὁρᾶτε οὖν καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὦ φιλόσοφοι, οἱ παρὰ φύσιν τῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ χρώμενοι καὶ ἀσεβοῦντες εἰς τὴν θεόν, μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν διαφθαρῆτε τρόπον. τότε γὰρ καὶ οἱ παῖδές εἰσιν καλοί, ὡς Γλυκέρα ἔφασκεν ἡ ἑταίρα, ὅσον ἐοίκασι γυναικὶ χρόνον, καθάπερ ἱστορεῖ Κλέαρχος. (605d)
>
> You philosophers, you who enjoy a love contrary to nature and sin against the goddess of love, see that you are not ruined in the same manner. For even boys are beautiful, as long as they still resemble women, as the hetaera Glycera, in the account given by Clearchus, used to say.

The technique at work in this passage is by now familiar: Myrtilus marshals the voice of the hetaera, here figured as a masculine appraiser of beauty, to deride the habits of philosophers. But the hetaera does double duty here: in addition to corroborating the depravity of philosophers, she is made to convert the homoerotic proclivities of philosophers into the compulsory heterosexuality of the grammarian.

For Myrtilus, then, the discourse of the hetaera unmasks the hypocrisy of philosophers, whether Socratic, Cynic, Stoic, or Epicurean, and exposes their inability to regulate properly the pleasures of the body. The story of a symposium held by Antigonus Gonatas, the father of Demetrius

Poliorcetes, that concludes Myrtilus' speech not only uses courtesans to critique the depravities of the Macedonian court, a technique familiar from Machon's *Chreiae*, it also exposes the sexual hypocrisy of philosophers at table. When a chorus of semi-nude Thessalian dancing girls disturbs the otherwise orderly and moderate round of drinking (εὐσχημόνως, 607c) at Antigonus' party, causing a riotous clamor among the men, the lone philosopher sits apart, refusing even the company of an *aulētris*. But he eventually comes to blows over her during a bidding war for her services (607d–e); still another is said to enjoy wearing a flute-girl's clothing (607f). Courtesans, and discourse about them, have a way of lowering even the most elevated of men, as a vignette about Antiphanes and Alexander suggests at the outset of Book 13. So, too, Myrtilus' account of the obscene sayings of courtesans introduces into Athenaeus' symposium a scurrilous discourse that reduces the Cynic philosopher to a status lower than that of the eponymous dog (611c).

In a book preoccupied with names and naming, Myrtilus lives up to his comic name: his risqué and scurrilous discourse challenges that of the philosophers and gives the *grammatikos*, like the hetaera, the last word:

> ἐγὼ δὲ κατὰ τὸν Ἀρίσταρχον τὸν τραγικὸν ποιητήν
> τάδ' οὐχ ὑπάρχων, ἀλλὰ τιμωρούμενος,
> καταπαύσω τὸν πρὸς σὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους κύνας ἐνταῦθα λόγον. (612f)
>
> And now I will end my speech against you and the other Cynic dogs with a line from the tragic poet Aristarchus:
> "Not as an instigator in these matters, but as the avenger."

With this quotation, Myrtilus affiliates himself with tragic authority and leaves off his erotic discourse; the hetaeras disappear from the table, and Cynulcus retreats into silence.

CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to show that the parodic and obscene discourse of hetaeras must be placed in the larger context of Athenaeus' banquet and the sophists and philosophers it features. The speakers of the *Deipnosophistae* do not tell their own jokes or improvise their own speeches; rather they quote the words of others in a continual struggle for discursive dominance. As we have seen, the witticisms of hetaeras play a central role in the game of verbal and rhetorical gamesmanship played by Athenaeus' sophists and philosophers. Their erudite displays

reflect, in part, the rhetorical environment of the late second/early third century C.E. in which individuals competed for status through verbal performance.[53] This sophistic self-fashioning appropriates the sayings of Athenian hetaeras and converts them into "the fine sayings of educated men" in order to articulate the complex relationship of Second Sophistic writers to the classical Greek past. Yet in both literary contexts, hetaeras serve a similar function: through them, male identity is constructed and continually negotiated.[54]

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[53] On performative displays and the competitive culture of the period, see Gleason 1991.

[54] I would like to thank Madeleine Henry and an anonymous referee for their help in sharpening the argument. Thanks are also owed to the audiences at the University of Chicago, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2002), for their comments on previous versions of this essay. For consistency, all Greek references are to Gulick's text; Gow's readings of Machon appear where noted. Unless otherwise specified, translations throughout are my own.

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